

GOVERNOR FLETCHER UNVEILS I-69 CORRIDOR DESIGNATION

Signs to go up along 10-county I-69 corridor through western Kentucky



Michael Pape, district director for U.S. Congressman Ed Whitfield, Transportation Secretary Bill Nighbert and Governor Ernie Fletcher unveil the I-69 corridor sign in Madisonville.

I-69 corridor designation signs are going up along the Pennyriple Parkway, the Western Kentucky Parkway, a section of Interstate 24 and the Purchase Parkway.

Governor Fletcher unveiled new I-69 corridor designation signs at stops in Madisonville and Mayfield. The governor noted that converting parkways to full interstate highway status over the next several decades will provide a significant boost to economic development all along the 10-county corridor.

"Kentuckians know that our parkways are the equivalent of interstate highways, and they have served us well," said Governor Fletcher. "When we have investors come to Kentucky from other states and other nations, they sometimes don't fully understand the place parkways have in our transportation system. Converting the existing parkways in this 10-county corridor to interstate status will improve our competitive position when we try to attract new industries."

The corridor designation is the next step toward an estimated \$616.7 million in new construction and parkway upgrades necessary to establish I-69 from Henderson to Eddyville. While the remainder of the route is still being studied, it is estimated another \$180 million would likely be needed to complete the route from Eddyville to Fulton for a total of \$796.7 million. The upgrades could be completed in phases allowing the cost be spread over several decades.

Kentucky Transportation Secretary Bill Nighbert said the

challenging part is coming up with the \$796.7 million dollars necessary to make the new interstate a reality over the next 20 years or more.

"We are at a great advantage over some of the other states because the cost of upgrading our parkways will be far less than constructing a new highway from the ground up," said Sec. Nighbert. "It will take patience and perseverance to make I-69 a reality. The placement of these new corridor designation signs is the next logical step toward that reality."

U.S. Rep. Ed Whitfield (R-Hopkinsville) said that continued cooperation between the federal and state government was needed to complete the I-69 project.

"As a member of the Congressional I-69 Caucus, I've worked to secure additional federal dollars for I-69," said Rep. Whitfield. "The recently enacted Transportation Authorization Bill provides \$3.16 billion for Kentucky over the next six years – that's a 30 percent increase over the last authorization. I'm hopeful the state will commit the necessary resources to begin upgrading the parkway system as I-69 will serve to greatly enhance economic development opportunities in western Kentucky."

Chief District Engineer Ted Merryman noted that a recent Economic Development Outlook Study cited by the Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development showed the importance of both four-lane highways and interstates for new job creation.

“This project will greatly enhance the economic potential of Hopkins County and the surrounding area. It will help us with industrial recruitment,” said Sen. Rhoads. “Hopkins County is located in the center of Western Kentucky and this

The corridor passes through ten Kentucky counties, including Henderson, Webster, Hopkins, Caldwell, Lyon, Livingston, Marshall, Graves, Hickman and Fulton.

